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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

"Some of my Best Friends" is a play which consists of five characters: the speaker; Catherine, a Protestant; Amy, a Jew; Anthony, an Italian Catholic; and Peter, a Negro. The play is performed in a round acting area rather than on a stage, and there is no scenery. The audience surrounds the acting area and plays an active role as the speaker talks with it and as individuals identify with the characters, who are all teenagers.

As an open-ended conflict of intergroup relations, the play does not present conclusions but provides problems for discussion. One discussion technique found productive is to divide the audience into small groups of ten to fifteen and to have discussion for twenty to thirty minutes. Each group then returns with several questions to be further discussed either by the group as a whole or by a panel. Some of the thought-provoking questions which might arise could include: Do we cover up our own prejudices by rationalization? Why are generalizations about any group -- Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Negro, white -- dangerous? To what extent are our children reflections of ourselves? To what extent does prejudice promote the "murder" of personality? and How can we as individuals, as a Nation, cease to hate and reconcile the gap between what we practice and what we preach?

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GUIDELINES: CLASSROOM
INTERGROUP EDUCATION PRACTICES

Crean

ED002002

Some of my best Friends

BY ROBERT CREAN

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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229 Yonge St.
Toronto, Canada

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS

BY

ROBERT CREAN

Written for
The National Conference of Christians and Jews
43 West 57th Street
New York, N. Y. 10019

With a discussion guide by
JAMES M. EAGAN

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

THE CHARACTERS

(All of them young people, in their teens)

THE SPEAKER

CATHERINE

AMY

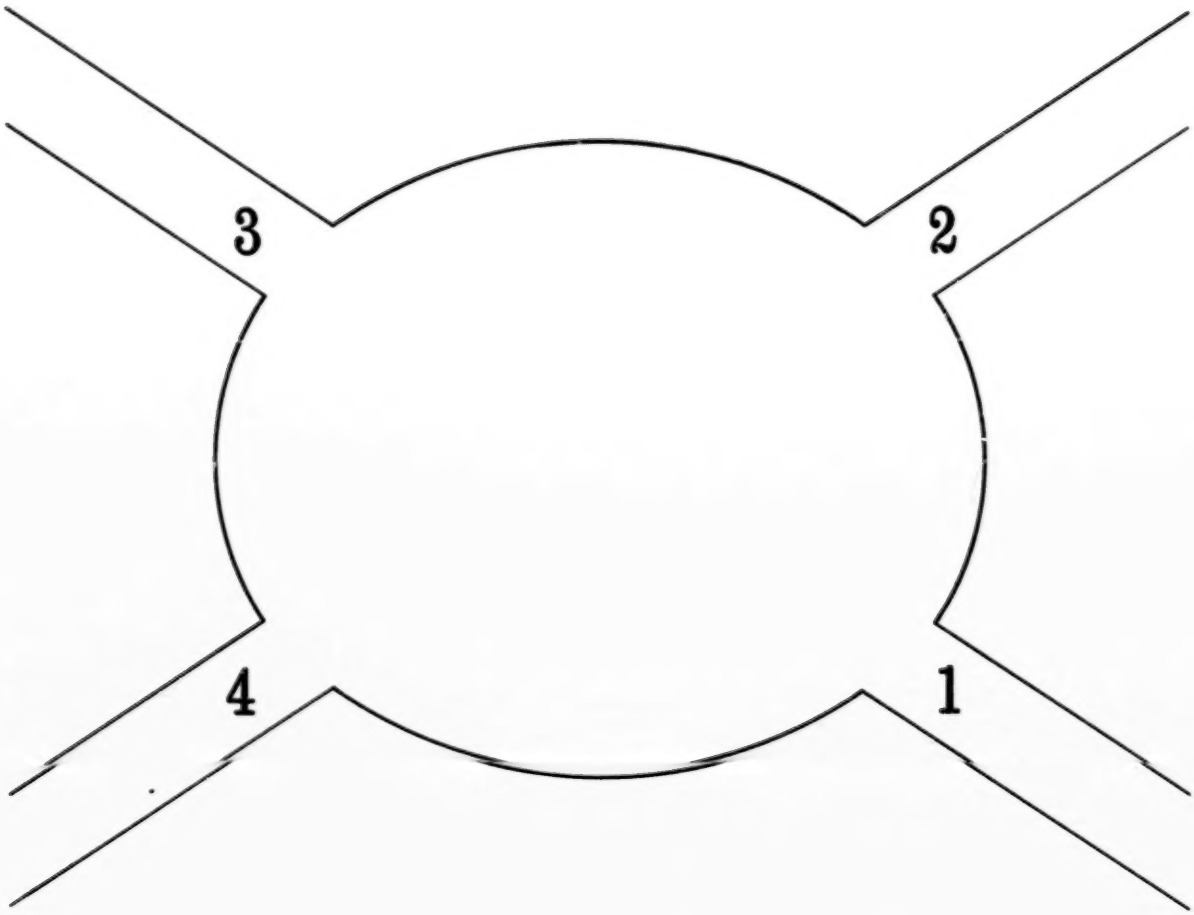
ANTHONY

PETER

THE SETTING

The play should be performed in an acting area, rather than on a stage. The audience surrounds the acting area, with clearly defined aisles for the entrances and exits of the actors.

There is no scenery.



DIAGRAM

for

Play in the Round

(It is advisable to use a follow spot.)

Use a strip lighting spot at each of the entrances, which creates a strip cross of light which the actor can go in and out of according to the importance of his role at the time he is performing.

"SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS"

(THE ACTING AREA IS EMPTY. THE SPEAKER - A FORTHRIGHT YOUNG MAN, OR WOMAN - ENTERS DOWN ONE OF THE AISLES (USE #3). HE SPEAKS IN A CASUAL AND FRIENDLY MANNER AS HE PASSES, SAYING "HELLO" AND "GOOD AFTERNOON" - OR EVENING - TO MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE AS HE PASSES THEM. (HE REACHES THE ACTING AREA, PAUSES FOR ATTENTION, THEN:)

SPEAKER: (DURING THIS SPEECH HE WALKS TO CENTER, X's RIGHT, THEN AROUND THE EDGE AND SHOULD END UP AT THE VERY END TOWARD #4 IN THE LIGHT)

Hello, we're about to make a play. Together, in this empty space, we'll make a play. The ingredients are simple. We don't need any scenery or thematic music or luxurious costumes. We need only you and your imaginations. Use your imaginations and see ... that this is not a stage and you are no longer an audience. You are the world and what we will see is ... Life. Our actors are not actors; they are mirrors reflecting you. Shall we begin? (HE MOVES ABOUT THE AREA, INDICATING AS HE SPEAKS:) We begin in a house not unlike your own. This is the living room ... the stairs... (NOW INDICATING AN AISLE THROUGH AUDIENCE:) The front entrance. Furnish this place, in your mind's eye --

(HE IS INTERRUPTED BY CATHERINE, A YOUNG GIRL, WHO RUSHES DOWN THE AISLE)

CATHERINE: (CALLING, AT #1 - RUNS TO CENTER) Mother! Is anybody home? (SHE CROSSES TO "STAIRS", CALLING UPWARD:) Mother!

(THE SPEAKER MOVES CLOSER TO AUDIENCE, SPEAKING QUICKLY)

SPEAKER: (X-ING SWIFTLY UP TOWARD #2) Quickly! Decorate this place!

CATHERINE: (CROSSING BETWEEN #3 AND #4) Mother!!!

SPEAKER: This is your home. Place the furniture where it belongs. There ... and there!

CATHERINE: (BREAKING DOWN) Oh help me, please! Please, someone help me! (SHE X's TO CENTER, FALLS TO HER KNEES)

CATHERINE: I killed him. I don't know why. I didn't mean to kill him. (CALLING:) Mother! Daddy! ... No one's here...

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE) We are here. And we've heard this confession, haven't we? But is this a mirror? Can this be a mirror? (WITH BACK TO CATHERINE, CENTER:) We don't kill, do we? (HE SPEAKS TO CATHERINE, WHO ANSWERS NUMBLY WITHOUT RELATING TO HIM:) (TURNING TO CATHERINE:) Whom did you kill?

CATHERINE: A friend ... A boy.

SPEAKER: Why did you kill him?

CATHERINE: I don't know. It happened so quickly.

SPEAKER: How did you kill him?

CATHERINE: I took a knife ... and held it in my hand ... and I lifted it ... and ... (SHE BREAKS, WEEPING)

SPEAKER: (GENTLY, X-ING DOWN TO #1) Tell us ... We care about people. We're interested. We're listening.

CATHERINE: I can't ...

SPEAKER: (X-ING TO HER) Yes, you can. Re-create the scene.

CATHERINE: It was ... at a dance.

SPEAKER: (QUIETLY) Yes. Where was the dance?

CATHERINE: (X's UP TOWARD #3) In the gymnasium.

SPEAKER: (X's UP CENTER STAGE TO #2. QUIETLY, TO AUDIENCE:) Quickly, change the scene. A gymnasium!

CATHERINE: No! No, it wasn't there. It didn't happen then. It wasn't at the dance.

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE:) Cancel the gymnasium. (X'S DOWN TO BETWEEN #4 AND #1, FACING UPSTAGE. TO CATHERINE:) Where did it happen?

CATHERINE: Afterwards ... That night. In the car.

SPEAKER: (CUEING AUDIENCE) A car. Describe the car. A convertible?

CATHERINE: No.

SPEAKER: Describe it. Something we dream about ... A sports car. His high-powered, bright-red two-seater. He got it for his birthday. His parents are wealthy and he --

CATHERINE: No.

SPEAKER: His father's car then?

CATHERINE: No, it wasn't in the car at all. It was at Amy's house.

SPEAKER: (X's TO CENTER. TO AUDIENCE:) Amy's house. The girl is confused. Do your best.

CATHERINE: (TO HERSELF) Yes, that was it. At Amy's house.

SPEAKER: Describe Amy's house.

CATHERINE: (MOVES DOWN TOWARD #4, TURNS BODY AROUND TO RIGHT) It's just an ordinary house.

SPEAKER: (MOVES DOWN TO #1, TURNS BODY AROUND LEFT. ENCOURAGING AUDIENCE:) An ordinary house.

CATHERINE: (PONDERING... WALKING ACROSS TO CENTER) We were in the recreation room.

SPEAKER: (FOLLOWING HER TO CENTER) (TO AUDIENCE:) Recreation room.

CATHERINE: Listening to records.

SPEAKER: What records? Tell us. Perhaps we could sing and recreate the scene.

CATHERINE: I can't remember. (X's TO #2:) A song which goes in one ear and out the other.

SPEAKER: (FOLLOWING HER TOWARD #2) Amy, then, Describe Amy.

CATHERINE: (WALKING TOWARD #3) I can't.

SPEAKER: (WALKS TO #3 ... TO #4 ... TO #1) What is she like? Who is she? (HE POINTS AMONG AUDIENCE) Is she her? or her? Or her? She must have some distinguishing characteristic. Who is Amy?

CATHERINE: (WALKS TOWARD CENTER) She's a Jew.

SPEAKER: (TURNS RIGHT AND FACES CATHERINE. PAUSES.) Why did you say that? That ... can't have anything to do with it.

CATHERINE: Yes, it has.

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE, WITH SINCERITY:) Not for us. Never for us. (HE TURNS TO CATHERINE:) You see, we don't label our friends. We don't discriminate, not in our world. (TO AUDIENCE:) Tell her. Some of our best friends are ... (HE IS INTERRUPTED BY A CALL, AS AMY - A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL - HURRIES DOWN AISLE #1)

AMY: (ENTERING AT #1) Catherine! Catherine! Let me in!

(SPEAKER DRAWS ASIDE AS CATHERINE RISES AND ALLOWS AMY TO ENTER AREA)

AMY: Catherine ... (AS CATHERINE BEGINS TO WEEP ONCE MORE) Don't cry. It wasn't your fault. You didn't mean to do it!

SPEAKER: (WALKS TO #2) (TO AUDIENCE:) I believe this is Amy.

AMY: I was there. I saw it all. Nobody is going to condemn you. Catherine, listen to me. It's Amy.

SPEAKER: (MOVES TOWARD UPPER AREA BETWEEN #2 AND #3) I was right.

AMY: I want to help you.

CATHERINE: (TURNING ON HER SUDDENLY:) It was your fault!

AMY: My fault?

CATHERINE: You encouraged me! You did it! You're the one who did it!

AMY: (SHOCKED, HURT) I didn't do anything!

CATHERINE: (BACKING AWAY FROM HER) Oh, yes, you did! Oh, yes, you did! I shouldn't have been with you in the first place. I shouldn't have gone with you. I was warned by my father. My father warned me that you ... (SHE STOPS)

AMY: (QUIETLY) That I what?

CATHERINE: (WITHDRAWN) That I should stay with my own group. And ... and not to try to solve the problems of the world.

AMY: I didn't know I was ... A "Problem of the World."

CATHERINE: Oh, but you are.

AMY: (WALKS UP TO #2) Why? (GETTING NO ANSWER, SHE TURNS AWAY) I see. (AMY MOVES AWAY FROM CATHERINE, WHO STANDS ALONE)

SPEAKER: (CROSSES TO CATHERINE. TO CATHERINE:) What group? What did you mean -- your own group? (SILENCE) Look, we're not here to judge you. (INDICATING AUDIENCE) These are not judges. We're here to understand ... You can tell us. What group?

CATHERINE: I don't know. I don't think I ever had a ... "group." At least, I never felt safe and secure and important because I was in a group. (SHE MOVES TO #4, THEN, TO AUDIENCE:) That's what you're supposed to feel, isn't it? If you're "in" and the rest of the world is "out" ... I guess my father meant his group.

SPEAKER: What group is that?

CATHERINE: (TURNING BODY LEFT) The Protestant group, I suppose.

SPEAKER: See here, if you're going to continue dividing everything up like that ...

CATHERINE: But I'm not like that. I'm not like that at all, that's what I'm trying to tell you. It's not the Protestant group, really. It's not narrowed down that way. It's just ... My father's friends.

SPEAKER: How does your father narrow down his friends?

CATHERINE: I don't know. The people he likes, I guess. He's a nice man. He just happens to like the same kind of people.

SPEAKER: What is your father?

CATHERINE: A very nice man.

SPEAKER: Yes, but what is he?

CATHERINE: (WALKING FAST TO BETWEEN #3 AND #2...EXPLODING:) He's my father! So don't you talk about him! (TURNS) He was right! (STARTS MOVING TOWARD AUDIENCE, WALKING DOWN TO BETWEEN #4 AND #1) (TO AUDIENCE:) He was right, you know. He told me that she was a Jew. And that he was a Catholic. And he didn't have any hatred in his heart, but I told him, "No, you're wrong, Daddy. It doesn't make any difference. We're all the same." (QUIETLY:) And he said, "I warn you, life is not that simple. You'll find in the long run that you are different and that you will be hurt. Take care of yourself." (SHE TURNS TO FACE THE SPEAKER, THEN TURNS TO POINT AT THE AUDIENCE:) Take care of yourselves!

AMY: (QUIETLY AND ALONE, STANDING BETWEEN #2 AND #1) My father told me to forget the past, to accept all people, and to try to live in peace. But to remember always, "Remember what you are, because they will remember." They remember... (TO AUDIENCE:) You remember, don't you? You remember with such great clarity, what she said. I am a Jew.

SPEAKER: (QUIETLY, BETWEEN THE TWO) Please...Please, this will get us no place. Where were we? (CROSSING TO CATHERINE) Tell me now, where are we?

CATHERINE: (DREAMILY, CROSSING TO BETWEEN #2 AND #1) We are at the dance. I had been dancing with him. He left me for a moment and ... and I talked with Amy. (AMY AND CATHERINE MOVE TOGETHER. A YOUNG NEGRO ENTERS DOWN AISLE #3)

PETER: (QUIETLY) I was at the dance, too. I was at the dance. (HE ENTERS ACTING AREA, LOOKS AT THE GIRLS AND MOVES ASIDE) I danced with no one.

SPEAKER: (MOVES DOWN TOWARD CENTER, BUT NOT IN CENTER) (TO AUDIENCE:) Stop now and picture the place. A gymnasium, balloons. An orchestra of kids. Populate the stage with dancers, with happy, laughing, swinging kids.

PETER: (STEPS IN TOWARD CENTER) I danced with no one.

SPEAKER: (CENTER, STOPPING, SYMPATHETIC:) What's you name?

PETER: (BACKS TO BETWEEN #3 AND #4) Peter.

SPEAKER: I'm sorry. I'm sorry that you ... (EAGERLY:) You see, we're not that way. (INDICATING AUDIENCE:) Some of our best friends are ... (THE GIRLS INTERRUPT - RE-CREATING A CONVERSATION AT THE DANCE:)

AMY: Stop worrying!

CATHERINE: But I like him, Amy. I like him very much.

AMY: Then it's fine!

CATHERINE: If he likes me.

AMY: I'm sure he does. I can tell.

CATHERINE: How?

AMY: You know the ways. How he looks at you. And other things.

CATHERINE: Maybe he looks at everyone that way.

AMY (SMILING) I don't think so.

CATHERINE: (QUICKLY) Of course, it isn't serious. I don't want you to think that.

AMY: Oh, I wouldn't think that. Hold your breath.

CATHERINE: Why?

AMY: He's coming. (ANTHONY, A YOUNG MAN, ENTERS DOWN AISLE #4. HE LOOKS ABOUT FOR CATHERINE, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE:)

ANTHONY: (CALLING) Catherine? Hey, Cathy?

CATHERINE: (CALLING) Over here, Tony!

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE, AS TONY CROSSES:) You see how he looks

at her? He makes his way among the dancing couples. He is young and his heart is in his eyes. (ANTHONY WAVES TO CATHERINE AS HE ENTERS ACTING AREA. IN SO DOING, HE ACCIDENTALLY BUMPS PETER)

ANTHONY: Sorry.

PETER: It's okay. (ANTHONY CROSSES TO CATHERINE - UP TOWARD CENTER)

ANTHONY: (EAGERLY) I've been looking all over the place for you.

CATHERINE: (HAPPILY) Have you?

ANTHONY: (EYES ONLY FOR HER) Yes ...

CATHERINE: Tony, this is my friend Amy.

ANTHONY: (NOT LOOKING AT AMY) I know Amy.

AMY: Hi. (BUT ANTHONY AND CATHERINE CONTINUE TO STARE AT ONE ANOTHER. AMY IS UNNOTICED.)

SPEAKER: (DOWN TO EDGE OF #1 WITH BACK TO THE AUDIENCE) There is a silence. This is the love scene and there is a silence here, although the orchestra continues to play and the couples to dance.

ANTHONY: (LOOKING DIRECTLY AT CATHERINE) Hi ...

CATHERINE: (LOOKING AT ANTHONY) Hi ...

SPEAKER: (SMILING, TO AUDIENCE:) Maybe it's not much of a love scene, but you know how it is. (AMY BREAKS INTO THE RAPPORT OF ANTHONY AND CATHERINE)

AMY: (STEPS INTO CENTER) I guess I'd better be going.

CATHERINE: You don't have to do that.

AMY: (STEPPING IN ONE STEP FURTHER) Two's company.

CATHERINE: (COMING AWAKE, SHE GRABS AMY'S ARM) It's nothing like that! Tony, tell her to stay. (BUT TONY'S EYES HAVE SHIFTED TO PETER, WHO IS WATCHING HIM)

ANTHONY: (MOVES UP TO CATHERINE) Why's he staring at me?

CATHERINE: (LOOKING ALL AROUND) Who?

ANTHONY: (INDICATING PETER) Him.

AMY: His name is Peter. He's in my class.

ANTHONY: He doesn't have to keep staring at people, does he?

CATHERINE: He isn't staring, he's just alone.

ANTHONY: (STILL IRKED, WALKS UP BETWEEN #2 AND #3, FACING AUDIENCE) I bumped into him, that's all. He's always standing in doorways or something.

AMY: He's a very nice boy, really.

ANTHONY: (TURNS RIGHT, TOWARD GIRLS) Does he want to get bumped into?

CATHERINE: Tony, don't talk like that!

ANTHONY: He bothers me. (MOVES IN TWO STEPS) I mean, he's always there.

AMY: He's got a right to be there.

ANTHONY: (WALKS TOWARD #3) Look, nobody's saying anything like that! I'm not talking about his color. I don't have anything against him except he makes me nervous, that's all.

CATHERINE: Why?

ANTHONY: Because he's there.

PETER: (AT #3) (TO AUDIENCE:) I've been here for a long time and I'm going to be around a lot longer.

ANTHONY: A lot of people make me nervous. (TO AMY:) Like you, right now, for instance.

CATHERINE: Tony!

AMY: I'd better go ...

CATHERINE: Amy! Don't be angry.

AMY: ... And see about the refreshments. (AMY TURNS TO GO AND AS SHE TURNS:)

ANTHONY: Don't go around telling everybody I hate Negroes, because I don't. Some of my best friends are ...

AMY: 'Bye, Catherine. (AMY CROSSES AWAY AND STANDS AT THE EDGE OF #4)

PETER: (TO AUDIENCE:) Some of my best friends aren't even here. They didn't get beyond the sixth grade.

SPEAKER: (CROSSES UP TO #2) (TO AUDIENCE:) The love scene isn't going very well.

PETER: My mother always told me: "You've got to get yourself through high school. Through high school, at least, no matter how much they try to stop you. You show them, son, you show them!"

SPEAKER: (CROSSES UP TO BETWEEN #2 AND #3) Of course, we don't have to take this scene as typical. I mean, we've been to a lot of dances, you and I, where the band plays on and the love scenes go on as scheduled.

CATHERINE: Why did you do that to Amy?

ANTHONY: Do what?

CATHERINE: Insult her.

ANTHONY: Did I insult her?

CATHERINE: You know you did.

ANTHONY: Why do you want to hang around with her?

CATHERINE: I like her.

ANTHONY: She's an odd ball.

CATHERINE: Why?

ANTHONY: I've never seen her around with any group I know.

CATHERINE: She doesn't have a group.

ANTHONY: So she's an odd ball.

CATHERINE: You're being mean!

ANTHONY: I'm telling the truth!

SPEAKER: (TO THEM:) Can we get on with the love scene!

ANTHONY: I don't want to talk about Amy. I want to talk about you and me.

CATHERINE: I'm not sure I want to. (SHE CROSSES AWAY FROM HIM, MOVES TOWARD #2)

ANTHONY: (FOLLOWING HER) Look, I'm not being mean to anybody or anything. Right now, I'm thinking about you, that's all. And it makes me nervous.

CATHERINE: Thinking about me makes you nervous?

ANTHONY: (RELUCTANTLY) Yeah ... (SHE SMILES AT HIM, HE GRINS. THEN:) Come on. (HE LEADS HER AWAY AND THEY STAND TOGETHER, AT THE EDGE OF #2)

SPEAKER: (MORE HAPPILY) You see, he doesn't hate anybody. He doesn't mean to hurt anybody.

PETER: (CROSSES TWO OR THREE STEPS IN TOWARD #4) (TO AUDIENCE:) He hates me because I'm Colored.

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE:) It's not that! It's just, he's always in the way. It's his personality!

AMY: (MOVES TOWARD BETWEEN #2 AND #1) He dislikes me because I'm Jewish.

SPEAKER: He wants to talk to his girl, that's all! Two's company. (TO AUDIENCE:) If you don't understand that, you're an odd ball. (HE TURNS TO OTHERS) Can we get on with the love scene? This is a dance, a nice friendly dance.

AMY AND PETER: (THEY ARE ALONE, ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE AREA.

AMY TURNS TO FACE PETER AND HE, WALKING TOWARD #4, TURNS LEFT TO FACE HER) This dance is hell.

AMY: I would never tell anyone. But for me, this is hell.

PETER: And many other dances have been hell.

SPEAKER: (TO THEM ANXIOUSLY) You've got the wrong idea. (TO AUDIENCE:) You've been to a lot of dances like this one. I mean, they weren't hell? You didn't have to stand in a corner and start to think the world was against you!

PETER: (CROSSING TO HIM) Whose side are you on?

SPEAKER: (BAFFLED) What?

PETER: I said, whose side are you on? I'm beginning to get suspicious of you.

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE) Suspicious of me?

PETER: Are you with me or against me?

SPEAKER: I'm with you! (INDICATING AUDIENCE) (CROSSING DOWN CENTER) Look, if you're suspicious of me, you're suspicious of them, because we're in this together. But we didn't start all this. (TURNS) We're innocent bystanders, that's all.

AMY: (QUIETLY) You hate.

SPEAKER: (WALKING UP TO CENTER, TURNING TO AMY) What did you say?

AMY: (CROSSING TO HIM) I said, you hate.

SPEAKER: (COMES UP TO BETWEEN #3 AND #2) Not us! (INCLUDING AUDIENCE) Look at us. Do we look like the kind of people who'd hate?

AMY: (SIMPLY) There isn't a single person alive without some hatred in his heart.

SPEAKER: (TURNS COMPLETELY AROUND, BACK TO AUDIENCE) (LOUDLY:) Can we get on with the love scene!!! (THEN:) Look, you've got us wrong. We wouldn't be here at all if we hated you. (DOWN IN CENTER) Some of our best friends ...

CATHERINE: (AT #4, LOUDLY, DECLAIMING:) Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?

SPEAKER: (RUNS TOWARD #4) That's the wrong love scene!!! (HE STOPS, CONFUSED, THEN HE TURNS -- REASONABLY -- TO AMY AND PETER) (COMES UP TO CENTER) Don't you see, you're imagining things, that's all. Now I admit it's difficult for you sometimes. But you're making it worse than it is.

AMY: (FACING CENTER) Do I imagine things? (TO AUDIENCE:) Do I imagine things? Look around you. In your town and in your school ... Where do the Jewish kids hang out?

PETER: (STEPS IN TOWARD CENTER) (TO AUDIENCE:) Where do the Negroes go? (PETER AND AMY ARE CLOSING IN ON THE SPEAKER)

AMY: With other Jews?

PETER: With other Negroes?

AMY: Or with you?

SPEAKER: (MAKES A PHYSICAL TURN, PUSHING THEM APART. PETER AND AMY GO BACK TO THEIR CORNERS -- PETER TO BETWEEN #4 AND #3, AMY TO BETWEEN #2 AND #1) Now look, we're trying to keep ourselves in balance here. (TO AUDIENCE:) Aren't we? I mean, we're trying to make some sense out of this and it's difficult if you're going to go around with a chip on your shoulders. (HE TURNS TO PAIR) It's your parents' fault, don't you see that? They filled you with old-fashioned fears and out-moded defensiveness ... when we don't feel that way at all. (TO AUDIENCE:) Do we?

AMY: You're perfect ... all of you.

SPEAKER: I didn't mean it that way, I ... Look, we've got a love scene coming up here. A scene of tenderness and beauty beyond your wildest imaginings. (INDICATING:) Sit down ... (AMY AND PETER SIT)

SPEAKER: (WALKING AROUND, CROSSING DOWN EDGE OF #1, ENDING EDGE OF #1, FACING UP) (TO AUDIENCE:) Now see, if you can, a moonlit night. Dip deeply into the wondrous vaults of your minds and find the visions deposited

there by the hundreds of technicolor movies you have fed upon since your youth. Select from these, the bluest of landscapes and a rhinestone-studded sky. Picture the scene ... and into all this beauty, our young lovers enter ... (CATHERINE AND ANTHONY TURN AND WALK RAPIDLY TOWARD CENTER)

ANTHONY: I did not!

CATHERINE: You did too!

ANTHONY: You're crazy!

CATHERINE: You're awful to say so!

SPEAKER: The love scene is not going exactly as planned.

CATHERINE: Did I ask you to go steady?

ANTHONY: No!

CATHERINE: Then why did you say you wouldn't?

ANTHONY: I didn't say I wouldn't!

CATHERINE: Oh yes, you did! You just came right out and said you don't believe in going steady, when nobody even asked you to go steady. It was the farthest thing from my mind ... and who told you not to go steady ... Some priest!

ANTHONY: (COMPLETELY, AND COMICALLY, THUNDER-STRUCK) Priest! How did he get in on this?

CATHERINE: Because you're a Catholic and you have to do everything he says!

ANTHONY: Wow! I do not! (EXASPERATED, HE TURNS TO AUDIENCE:) I didn't come out here to talk about religion. She started that! I just tried to talk some sense to her and then, out of a clear blue sky ... a technicolor sky ... comes a priest! (CONFIDENTIALLY TO AUDIENCE:) Look, I admit I'm a Catholic. What's that mean? I turn into a puppet or something whenever I want to think a thought? I'll tell you what it means. It means I'm taught to think about other people, and to love my neighbors, and ... (HE STOPS GUILTILY AS AMY AND PETER, MOVING IN TOWARD

CENTER AND CROSSING, TO OPPOSITE SIDE OF STAGE. THEY LOOK AT HIM IN SILENT ACCUSATION.

ANTHONY: (TO AUDIENCE:) Aw, skip it.

SPEAKER: (MOVES TO BETWEEN #4 AND #1) (TO AMY AND PETER, AS THEY CROSS STAGE IN FRONT OF HIM:) Sit down. Please sit down.

CATHERINE: I want to go home!

SPEAKER: Wait a minute!

CATHERINE: I want to go home! Something's wrong here! Something's going on I don't understand!

SPEAKER: Nothing we can't fix up if we all try!

CATHERINE: I have tried. (SHE CROSSES TO AUDIENCE) (TO AUDIENCE:) Believe me, I have tried. I've gone out on a limb trying to cross all the lines of religion and color and ... And what do I get for it! (FURIOUSLY, SHE POINTS IN ACCUSATION AT ANTHONY) Do you know he's an Italian!!!

ANTHONY: I'm supposed to ride in a gondola here! I'm supposed to sing "O Solo Mio!"

SPEAKER: (MOVES UP TOWARD CENTER) Now wait! Please! Hold it!

CATHERINE: I have tried! I told myself that, despite what my father said, we are all the same.

PETER: I'm supposed to paint my face white here! She wants us all the same!

SPEAKER: (RUNNING TOWARD PETER) We are! We are the same!

AMY: Well, we're not! We're different! (SHE CROSSES TO SPEAKER) Until you admit that, you're just causing trouble, don't you know that?

CATHERINE: (CROSSES TO AMY) Amy, Let's go home.

SPEAKER: Not yet! (AS AMY AND CATHERINE TURN AND MOVE TOWARD #3) We haven't finished the love scene!

(ANTHONY AND PETER STAND AT A DISTANCE, LOOKING AT ONE ANOTHER)

ANTHONY: What are you looking at?

PETER: Nothing.

ANTHONY: Fine. (ANGRILY) Look, I want you to know I love my neighbor and all that, but you've got to stop being in my way all the time. (HE TURNS AND CROSSES UP TOWARD #2)

PETER: (LOOKING UP TOWARD #2) I'm going to be here a good long time. (HE TURNS AND CROSSES OUT AT #1)

SPEAKER: (TO AUDIENCE:) End of love scene. (THE FOUR CHARACTERS NOW STAND APART, EACH FACING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION)

SPEAKER: (MOVES TO #4, FACES AUDIENCE) I'm afraid the murder scene comes next. You know the setting. The recreation room at Amy's house. Furnish it simply and get it over with. (AS AMY AND CATHERINE CROSS TO CENTER) (CATHERINE IS LYING ON THE FLOOR WITH HER LEG KICKING TO IMAGINARY MUSIC. AMY, KNEELING, IS PUTTING ON A RECORD; SHE'S FACING CATHERINE ON HER LEFT. CATHERINE'S HEAD IS FACING #4. ANTHONY IS AT #2. PETER IS AT #3.) The two girls are listening to records. If you could sing something which goes in one ear and out the other ...

CATHERINE: (TO AMY) I'm glad I found out. He's horrible.

AMY: You're right. Look how he treated me.

CATHERINE: He's always seemed so nice. I don't know what happened.

AMY: (STANDS) You found out, that's all. It's good you found out in time. (SHE BEGINS TO DANCE ALONE TO A ROCK'N ROLL BEAT. SHE STARTS AT CATHERINE'S LEFT IN THE DANCE AND THEN GOES AROUND CATHERINE TO END UP AT HER RIGHT. CATHERINE REMAINS KNEELING.)

CATHERINE: (DEJECTEDLY I don't understand anything.

AMY: (CARELESSLY) It's his kind, that's all.

CATHERINE: What do you mean?

AMY: His kind are all the same.

CATHERINE: Kind?

AMY: (ON CATHERINE'S RIGHT) You know. They stick together.

CATHERINE: Who? (AMY STOOPS AND TAKES CATHERINE'S SHOULDERS)

AMY: You know who ... (A WHISPER:) Catholics.

CATHERINE: Amy!

AMY: Don't pretend. Don't pretend you don't feel the way I do about them.

CATHERINE: (DRAWING AWAY) Amy, that's not like you. You don't say things like that.

AMY: (CROSSES TO #1) What about <u>you</u>? Be truthful! Tell me the truth!

CATHERINE: (VERY DISTURBED, VERY UNSURE) I don't ... I don't hate anybody!

AMY: The truth!

CATHERINE: (DOUBTING HERSELF) I don't hate anybody ...

AMY: Oh yeah ...? (SHE TURNS, ALMOST SADLY, AND STANDS WITH HER BACK TO CATHERINE. ANTHONY AND PETER NOW MOVE IN FROM THEIR POSITIONS TOWARD CENTER.)

CATHERINE: (TO HERSELF) I don't hate people because they are Colored or Jewish or Catholics. That's irrational, that's ... I only hate them when they hurt me. I hold out my hand to them and ... they hurt me. (FACING DOWNSTAGE BETWEEN #4 AND #1, SHE LOOKS UP TO AUDIENCE:) You see, that's how it was. I looked at myself and I looked into my heart and I saw -- no matter how I pretemd and how much I deny ... (ALMOST WEEPING NOW) I know what I think of them. (SHE LOOKS TO FLOOR) And then ... I took up the knife ... (SHE MAKES A COMPLETE PHYSICAL TURN TO FACE OUT #1, TAKES AN IMAGINARY KNIFE IN HER FIST.)

SPEAKER: (MOVING IN) No! No, stop this!

CATHERINE: (STARTING TO FACE #2) And I lifted the knife ...

SPEAKER: There isn't any knife! Look! You haven't any knife! (CATHERINE COMES TO HER FEET SLOWLY)

CATHERINE: And everything welled up inside me, all the hatred I never thought was there ... And I turned on them ...

SPEAKER: Stop! (CATHERINE RUSHES TO ANTHONY AT #2 AND POUNDS ON HIS CHEST WITH HER FIST AS IF IT HELD A KNIFE.)

CATHERINE: Wop! Dirty Italian! Catholic!

SPEAKER: No! (CATHERINE TURNS ON PETER AT #3, REPEATING HER ACTION. THE OTHERS STAND UNMOVED.)

CATHERINE: (POUNDING ON HIM) Black! Coon! Nigger!

SPEAKER: (BLOCKING HIS EARS) Stop!

CATHERINE: (RUSHING TO AMY AT #1) You kike! Jew! (SHE BEGINS TO WEEP) Jew! (SHE TURNS TO AUDIENCE, THE "KNIFE" STILL IN HER HAND.)

CATHERINE: Oh, God, forgive me ... (CATHERINE DROPS THE KNIFE, TURNS, THEN DROPS TO HER KNEES, FACING UP TO #3.)

SPEAKER: (RUSHING TO HER) You didn't kill, you see? They're still standing. You didn't murder anyone.

CATHERINE: With words. I said the words ...

SPEAKER: (TURNING ON AUDIENCE) She didn't mean it! You know her and she didn't mean it. (INDICATING ACTORS) You see them all? They're just like you, really. They're good ... intelligent ... well-meaning ... (HE STOPS, HOPELESSLY) (THE ACTORS STAND IN A ROW, NUMBLY)

CATHERINE: (QUIETLY) Prejudice ... In everyone of us you will find ... prejudice.

SPEAKER: (EAGERLY) Not in me!

CATHERINE: And prejudice will hurt, and maim, and kill.

SPEAKER: Not in us! Not us!

PETER: (QUIETLY) Prejudice is our legacy, come down through history. From the family and village and the nation, prejudice is our inheritance.

SPEAKER: It's the fault of the parents, yes! (TO AUDIENCE:) Tell them! We're not to blame!

AMY: We can't pretend we stand together. The differences are all around us. Prejudice is part of us all.

SPEAKER: (MOVING INTO AUDIENCE) Not in me. Not in us!

ANTHONY: All of us! (ALL FOUR START REPEATING "He did it! They caused it!" AS THEY WALK OUT) Whenever we are hurt, we cry out: He did it! They caused it! Prejudice thrives on our failures.

SPEAKER: (RUNNING TO #2, TO #3, TO #4, CALLING:) Stop! Where are you going? (THE ACTORS CONTINUE MOVING TOWARD EXITS)

SPEAKER: (TURNING BEWILDEREDLY) Where are you going? We haven't finished. (PURSUING THEM) We have questions! You haven't answered our questions!

(THE ACTORS EXIT. THE SPEAKER WALKS SLOWLY BACK TO THE ACTING AREA.)

SPEAKER: It seems we have ended a play ... a play for which there is no ending. (HE TURNS AND FACES AUDIENCE) Unless you have an ending. For this was not a stage, but life. And you are not an audience, but the world.

THE STAGE IS THEN OPEN FOR DISCUSSION.

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GUIDE FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

Prepared by DR. JAMES M. EAGAN,
Vice President
in Charge of Rearing Children of Good Will Programs

"Some of My Best Friends" is intended to be an open-ended play which does not present conclusions but which presents problems for discussion. For this reason, audiences should be told in advance that their role is an active one; they are to listen, identify with the characters if they wish, but above all they are to participate actively in the group discussion which follows the play. The intention of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in commissioning the play was to provide the machinery and the setting for lively and thoughtful discussion. The views reflected in the play are not necessarily those of NCCJ, but are purposely included to provoke discussion.

Ideally, the playing cast would be composed of young people who could remain to take part in the discussion which follows the play. The play is designed to produce a somewhat sharp interaction of young persons and adults. One technique found productive is to divide the audience into groups of ten to fifteen and have discussion for twenty to thirty minutes. Each group then returns with one or two questions to be further discussed by the group as a whole, by an "expert" or a panel of "experts."

This method is more conducive to a change of attitude than that of merely giving information alone. In a sense, the form of the play is comparable to the Greek concept in which the audience becomes part of the play, participating as though they, too, were actors. In a small group, it might be possible to stop the play and let members of the audience act out what they consider would be a satisfactory ending for the play. The play could then be resumed to give the author's own open-ended finish.

The play should itself provoke a series of questions which should be the focus of discussion. In case, however, this does not happen, a few questions for discussion are included. These are to be used only as a guide for encouraging the development of further questions.

1. Do we cover up our own prejudices by rationalization? What is the role of "tokenism" in the elimination of prejudice? Is the title "Some of My Best Friends" indicative of hypocrisy? Does it indicate that there can be minor breakthroughs without major breakthroughs in overcoming prejudice?
2. Do the warnings by "father" to stay within the group have an appreciable effect on young people? Do we sometimes tend to live in self-contained and self-imposed ghettoes? What is the effect of this upon community life? To what extent is group cohesiveness necessary?
3. Why are generalizations about any group—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Negro, white—dangerous?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the "speaker" that prejudice seems to be the mark of all men? Are we all destined to be prejudiced in one form or another?
5. To what extent does Catherine show the self-inflicted damage done by prejudice? Is this perhaps even greater than the harm done to the victims of prejudice? To what degree does prejudice promote the "murder" of personality? How is it possible to believe in the inherent worth of the individual, his dignity, and be prejudiced?
6. Is the play a characterization of the "gentle people of prejudice"?
7. How do we bring ourselves to admit our own prejudices? How can we diminish scapegoating? How do we become a mirror for prejudice? To what extent are our children reflections of ourselves? What are we going to do to correct all this—in home, school, church, the community? How can we as individuals, as a nation, cease to hate? How can we reconcile the gap between what we preach and what we practice—The American Dilemma?

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